

Exhibit No. 7

Date 3-7-09

Bill No. SB 303

Testimony in Support of SB 303
Before the Senate Finance and Claims Committee
By David Shively
March 9, 2009

Chairman Bales and members of the Committee, my name is David Shively. I live at 2015 S. 7th W. in Missoula. I am an Associate Professor of Geography at the University of Montana, Missoula. As a geographer who conducts research in water policy and water resources management, and who has been involved with organizations which seek to improve water resources management, I am writing you to express my support of Senate Bill 303, assuming it is amended as recommended by Mr. Gerald Mueller, who is submitting testimony on behalf and at the direction of the Clark Fork River Basin Task Force.

Based on my research and work with both the Task Force (with which my Department has co-sponsored two conferences concerning water management issues in the Clark Fork Basin over the last 2 years, and we are planning two others to be offered this year), I have found that this group (like the Upper Clark Fork River Basin Steering Committee) is very unique in the West given its creation by the legislature as collaborative and consensus-based organization charged with developing recommendations for water management that will be considered by DNRC for inclusion in Montana's State Water Plan (this did occur in 2004). In my research, I have found that the Task Force model, which in essence represents the intent of the "watershed councils" provided for in SB 303, is unique in the western (i.e., prior appropriation) states. Other states have water resource planning programs and/or initiatives, but the vast majority of these are conducted primarily by state agency staff without the collaborative stakeholder involvement process. Others might be delegated to executive level commissions, or special commissions created by the former type.

The fact that the Task Force has proven to be successful in meeting its charge demonstrates that the intent of SB 303 is sound. The bill signifies the intent of the Montana Legislature to continue the broad state water resources planning effort that began in 1967 (under the auspices of the 1967 Water Resources Act). I urge your committee to support SB 303 as it has the potential to accomplish much with a minimal investment of funds.

Thank you,

David Shively, PhD